

To: Honorable members of the Judicial Committee

Hello, my name is Giselle Jacobs and I am a Community Outreach and Advocacy Specialist for the Breaking the Cycle - Empowering Families Support Group and a lifelong resident of Hartford.

I am for Bill No. 5288. An Act Concerning Children of Incarcerated Women

I remember the first time I spoke here at the LOB. Sister Cathy at My Sisters Place on Capen St. asked me to prepare testimony because they were going to cut funding for homeless shelters. It was in 89, I was 9 months pregnant with my daughter, homeless, even after having just rec'd my Honorable Discharge from the United States Army. Her father lived in Washington D.C. which was my last duty station. I choose to go to a homeless shelter as opposed to temporarily moving in with my mother even though I was an only child, because at the time she was struggling with personal issues.

Just 7 yrs ago I was pregnant and locked up, lying on metal, looking up to the ceiling wondering how did I get here. At the time I was a single parent of 3 beautiful children, living in a 3bdr Colonial in E. Hartford, C230 Benz in the driveway, working 3 jobs (full-time @ CT Outreach as a Financial Counselor for DMHAS Young Adults transitioning into Adult Services, part-time @ Inter-Community Mental Health as a 3rd shift House Manager, and the Hispanic Health Council as a Field Researcher conducting late-night data survey with people at risk for HIV), obtaining my Masters of Education with a Concentration in Counseling Psychology degree at Cambridge College, doing a practicum in New Britain at one of Wheelers outpatient clinics for women, and I am locked up. The pain, the disappointment, the humiliation...I wanted to die.

I caught my fiancé in the bed making love with another women on the comforter set I'd recently gotten him, just hours after I'd left the same bed. I blacked out, already in burn out from being a single parent, maintaining a household, working 3 jobs, going to college in Springfield and doing a practicum in New Britain. I jumped on him, by the time his room-mate pulled me off of this six foot, ex-golden glove recipient; he was black and blue all over. I went home and within hours my bedroom was full of women in my network comforting me.

Several weeks later we are driving in my car on our way to dinner to see if we could reconcile the relationship and someone rear ends me. The police are called and I'm told there's a warrant for my arrest and they lock me up. He had put a warrant out for my arrest and never told me, not for jumping on him but because someone had broken his car window and he told the police it was me. I eventually had my day in court where I was able to defend myself and inform the judge that it could have been any number of women. So although I was able to get out of jail and they dismissed the case, because I did not get the therapy for the trauma of the ordeal, I relapsed, dropped out of college and lost everything.

For the past four years I have been working on getting my life back on track as well helping others to do the same. However, just last week I found myself sitting on my couch thinking it would be a good idea to take the persons ATM card that was mistakenly sent to my address and withdraw money that did not belong to me. Not because I wanted to steal and cause harm to someone I did not know. More so because I was hungry, there was little food in the house, my son is coming home from UCONN for a week break and my food stamps got cut off. I have been looking for full-time employment for almost 3yrs now. Yes, going to the ATM and stealing someone's money seemed like a good idea, but I didn't do it.

My heart goes out to the many women who are doing time, many of which who have gone through the similar situations and did not have loved ones sticking by them even though they made a bad decision. I am here to be a voice for all the mothers at York who made a bad decision and should be given an opportunity to get it right, whose baby only concern is that they have the opportunity to bond with their mother who has carried them for nine months. Additionally, has shown that mothers who get to keep their babies usually turn their lives around and chances of recidivism are lessened.

I thank and commend the committee for allowing me to speak and on taking leadership on this issue.

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Breaking the Cycle

{EMPOWERING FAMILIES}

~SUPPORT GROUP~

FOR YOUTH, PARENTS, CAREGIVERS, AND
FRIENDS WHO HAVE BEEN IMPACTED BY A
LOVED ONE'S INCARCERATION

*Your involvement with this group will allow
you to gain and provide support to others in
your community who are affected by a loved
one's incarceration.*

*Children of incarcerated parents need to
know they are loved and not abandoned.
Communities need to know what these
children face.*

*Meetings held the 1st and 3rd Tuesday
of every month at 6 pm
2550 Main Street, Hartford*

*Please contact Giselle at (860) 726-6504 or
gisellejacobs@hotmail.com
for more information and to confirm attendance.*